2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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787 began to dig around behind her bedding and brought out a bowl
775 such as that in which buffalo chips are pounded into powder. She said: 'Here. I want you to eat this.' It didn't look good to me and I just kind of felt it with my fingers. Instead of having sat by my sister as my mother had directed, I had remained by the door, because I felt kind of scared in some way. So I told them: 'Wait. I guess I will go out a minute. I will be right back.' But I got out of there and ran home as fast as I could go—back to my own bed, back to myself. If I had eaten what they had given me that would have been the last of me! After this dream I got well."

Mourning

765 As soon as word was circulated that someone had died, all rela-
152 tives of that person, especially the women, were supposed to gather as soon as possible to cry and mourn for the deceased. Very close kin were expected to show their sorrow at the death of a loved one not only by crying and wailing, but also by casting off their good clothes and donning old ones,—robes, for instance, consisting of pieces of old discarded lodge covers, or ordinary robes that were rough and worn,—and by cutting the hair.[1] This latter was truly
[832] a great sacrifice, for to the Gros Ventres one of the chief criteria
[302] of beauty, in men and women alike, was extreme length of hair. The hair of younger children in a family was spared, even at the death of parents, but should, say, a father die, the hair of the older daughters was shorn, though not cut so short as that of the widow.
[887] An elderly woman was usually called upon to do the cutting and the widow, guided by the strength of her emotional reaction, would indicate how short she wished her hair to be. It was said that some widows would leave their hair relatively long, just free of the shoulders, while others " when they felt too badly, had all their hair cut off, almost as men now wear their hair."

Close kin were accustomed to further show grief by going off to the hills and fasting, crying aloud as they wandered about alone, and sleeping out without shelter. A parent would have done so at the loss of a son, one spouse at the death of the other, or a sister for her deceased brother. Such mourners would stay out

[1] For this and other practices in mourning, see Kroeber, 1908, p. 181.

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until someone went after them and talked to them and persuaded them to eat and drink some water.

The most extravagant expressions of grief were expected on the part of close relatives of men killed at war. It was under such circumstances that the mourners tore off their clothes and gashed their arms and legs. The blood was not washed off and the wounds were allowed to fester, often leaving ugly scars. It was maintained that in mourning the Gros Ventres did not cut off fingers,—that was done only in fulfilment of a vow.

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If a brave young man were killed by the enemy, his parents went even further in the expression of their grief, and sometimes had to be restrained from committing suicide. The father could show additional sorrow by cutting the manes and tails of his son's horses, which he then led about as he wandered on the hills for four days and nights, crying and mourning. The following case illustrates the behavior of an elder brother in mourning for a younger one, but may be somewhat exceptional in that the former felt responsible for the latter's death.

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"Little Man, also known as Deafie, was on his way home with his younger brother. They had been on a friendly visit to the Crow. There were others in the party and one evening while they were camped, the younger brother had a dream. The next morning he told them: 'I had a bad dream. I dreamed I got killed.' One of the older men said: 'All right. We will stop here awhile so we can make a sweat-lodge and we will smudge.' (That is what they did when they wanted to prevent something bad from happening.) But Little Man told them that, although the rest of them might believe in dreams, he did not, and he insisted that they move on. The old man couldn't say anything more. As they were going along that same day, Little Man was scouting ahead and sighted the enemy. The Gros Ventre party separated, Little Man going with one group, his brother with the other. The brother happened to go right into the midst of the Assiniboine and was killed. The others heard the shots, but when they got there, Little Man found his brother lying dead. He then tore off all his clothes and would have committed suicide by dashing singlehanded after the enemy had not his brother-in-law grabbed him and held him back. When they got home, Little Man felt so badly that he cut off his beautiful

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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a circle and sang a wordless song, while "other men and women danced up and down in one place behind the old women singers." 785 796*

The vower would start his "dance" by reaching back and tearing off his shield, and in doing so, of course tearing the skin over the skewer in his back. Then with the bone whistle he carried round his neck he blew "a rapid whistle," "a sort of trill," "as if he were blowing on a flute,"—this as a sign he was ready to go through the rest of the ordeal. Then while the singers "sang hard for him," he danced with both feet, pumped up and down, and swung around, pulling and jerking and backing on the taut thongs attached to the center pole in order to tear the skewered flesh of his chest and to free himself. Sometimes the flesh would not break, or the flesh on one side of his chest would while that on the other would not. When the ordeal would go on very long, and the suffering would be extreme, and the dancer might be exhausting himself, some one of the onlookers might have pity on him and say to a bystander: "You go and tear him loose." He would then go and push and throw the "dancer" hard so the skin would break off. The Boy and Thick knew one case where the skin on one side of the "dancer's" chest would not break off even by such pushing and throwing; so they had to cut it with a knife. People thought that the darker a man's skin was the tougher it was and this last man had very dark skin. "Sometimes the dancer's skin was so tough it would stretch way out like a shirt." When a "dancer's" skin would finally break under the pulling and backing he would just fall over to the ground and the thong would spring back round the pole. Then he would be taken back and laid down and the loose skin would be trimmed off. These trimmed off pieces of skin would be gotten together by the ritual grandfathers who would take them to the buffalo skull (at the base of the center pole), hold them up, and then lay them on top of the skull, "as an offering of the very body itself." [534]

"Some 'dancers' did not have much nerve and would wince and flinch. Some didn't bat an eye." At one dance, Coming Daylight told us, one young man after the thongs were attached and pulled "just burst out crying, it was so painful. After that he went to the center pole and put his arms around it and cried there. I [152]●

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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785 *796 [152] couldn't stand it. I ran home to my grandmother and cried too because I pitied that young man." On another occasion, Thick too, then a young boy, "cried from the pitiful scene," as he expressed it. "Big Thunder," according to Coming Daylight, "had very long thick hair. When he was dancing around the pole in the Sacrifice Dance his hair swept the ground. It looked just awful. I screamed and ran home." From what was told The Boy by his brother who underwent this self-torture once in the Sacrifice Dance and twice alone on a knoll (see details of latter rite, pp. 393-398), "The beginning was hardest; as you went along, you got sort of numbed and the pain was not so bad." His brother had felt very acute pain at the trimming of the lacerated flesh. That night the pain was so intense that he could not sleep; "it was as if two red hot coals were there."

According to Al Chandler the Gros Ventres considered their Sacrifice Dance a much more severe ordeal in the way of self-torture and fasting than were the Sun Dances of neighboring tribes and to this severity they attributed the early abandonment of the rite.

After all the "dancers" had in turn gone through their self-torture, they left the scene together, and were through with their participation in the Sacrifice Dance and could break their fast. But, through the succeeding fourth night, some of the other participants (which ones we could not discover) continued their fast, and the others danced and sang.

*796 Certain important features of the Sacrifice Dance have not been mentioned so far, as we could not learn just where they fitted into the ritual sequence. We shall describe them now.

The Boy was quite positive that a sweat-lodge rite was held in connection with the Sacrifice Dance, on the fourth night of singing and just prior to the beginning of the Dance proper. In all likelihood the rite followed in general pattern that of the Sacred Pipe sweat-lodge. Sweet grass was the proper ritual material smudge throughout the Sacrifice Dance including this preliminary sweating.

787 *796 Some of the participants in the Sacrifice Dance,—"not necessarily the one or ones who had made vows, but dancers trying their

8:Flannery E-5 (1940-1948)1960 NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Her final rejoinder was such a witty and pointed one that everyone laughed heartily at her rival's expense. In this culture, of course, public ridicule was a far more effective retaliation than the biting and scratching that other women said frankly they would have indulged in when attacked.

Expression of emotional excess was institutionalized for the Gros Ventres, as for the rest of the Plains, in the bereavement situation. Upon the death of a husband, son, or father, a woman was expected to start wailing as soon as she heard the news, have her hair cut off, discard good clothes for old ragged ones, gash her arms and legs, go to the hills to mourn and cry, resisting for a time the pleas of her relatives to return, and being watched lest she attempt suicide. Coming Daylight was only a young woman when she was first widowed and the mourning pattern was still in full vogue. It is certain from other evidence than Coming Dayling had a deep affection for this husband to whom she had been given as a child-bride and in whose kindly and indulgent treatment she had found a pleasant escape from the rigorous discipline of her grandmother. Nevertheless the public expression of her grief was minimal—no abandonment for her. Although her sister was sent on the hills with her to keep watch over her in the usual way, Coming Daylight was easily persuaded to return shortly though she herself was proud of the fact that she had stayed out so long that she actually had got a frozen toe! In later years when all that was left of the ritual was the wailing out on the hills, she lost the son whom she herself, and everybody else, acknowledged as her favorite. She had not been on the hills very long when she experienced a significant dream, as follows. She was in a lodge at the rear of which was a big pile of tobacco mixture and a pipe. The owner of the lodge filled the pipe and approached her. She was frightened because she didn't smoke. The owner of the lodge however told her: "Look at these people." She looked and saw many with their hair cut and their bodies bleeding from the gashes inflicted in grief. The man then told her: "That is in the past. Nowadays your only consolation is in smoking." So she accepted the pipe and, after smoking it, she was painted in ceremonial fashion by each of those other mourners. Then the owner of the lodge dismissed her saying: "Now, go home and don't ever go on the hills and mourn again. But always smoke if you want to." She went home right after this dream and when she told her husband of it he accepted it as valid and persuaded her sister to prepare for Coming Daylight her first real smoke. She maintained that the habit subsequently developed was actually a great comfort to her.

The final area with which we shall be concerned here is the war complex—a vital aspect of the old Plains culture. Gros Ventre women were allowed direct but limited participation in these activities in the sense that, while they would not join a party of men who were going on horse-raiding or revenge expeditions, if opportunity offered they might exhibit the same kind of bravery that a man should show and derive considerable status therefrom. For instance, if one of the enemy fell nearby, the women rushed out from camp to count coup, and to grab trophies with which to inaugurate the relationship known as "enemy-friends." Coming Daylight, however, was never one to indulge in this sport. She told of the one—and to her extremely distasteful—occasion on which her hand literally was forced. It seems that during a raid on their camp one of the enemy was shot and her husband scalped him. The victim was lying not far from her lodge and, as her husband dashed off to pursue the rest of the Assiniboine, he shouted for her to come out and see what was going on. Coming Daylight saw the man lying there, face down, covered with blood. He was not dead